

Key Points for Testimony; CATA State Licensure Raised Bill 354

~ Consumer Protection: This is not an issue of seeking another license but an issue of consumer protection. In the absence of a dedicated art therapy license, many Connecticut art therapists are already licensed under other mental health licenses (in particular the counseling license which option closes in 2022.) The issue is to ensure that consumers can identify professionals that are qualified to provide art therapy services by establishing initial and continuing competency requirements for practice of art therapy and preventing individuals without appropriate training and clinical experience from claiming to practice art therapy. [Provide an example of untrained/non-credentialed practitioner(s) offering art therapy services and any negative result on the client.]

~Quality of service: To ensure quality of art therapy services by a specifically trained and experienced provider, give your knowledge of the effectiveness of art therapy treatment.

~ Make a statement in support of the state approval to grant art therapy licensure and your agreement to the proposed Bill #354 'with the adjustments suggested by the art therapy Board.'

~The professional impact working in a non-licensed field has had on your career/job opportunities etc.

Please copy us on your email to the Public Health Committee so we can track testimony (cc: maryhamilton@artfortherapy.org and

ellie758@gmail.com) Thank you!

Deadline is March 4th

Email to: phtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Why the Art Therapist License is critical to the practice of Art Therapy and my career as a Licensed, Registered and Board Certified Art Therapist.

Art therapy is a distinct mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the Art Therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem. Art therapy practice requires knowledge of visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms) and the creative process, as well as of human development, psychological, and counseling theories and techniques.

Educational requirements include theories of art therapy, counseling, and psychotherapy; ethics and standards of practice; assessment and evaluation; individual, group, and family art therapy techniques; human and creative development; multicultural issues; research methods; and internship experiences in clinical, community, and/or other settings.

Because of the uniqueness of the study and practice of art therapy, practitioners must be trained within an approved and accredited art therapy master's program recognized by the American Art Therapy Association. Therefore training for the profession is conducted by educational institutions accredited by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation with Art Therapy master's programs approved by the Educational Program Approval Board of the American Art Therapy Association.

Potential Harm from Untrained Practice of Art Therapy.

The license serves to protect the public from potential harm that may be caused when a non-qualified person promotes himself/herself as a qualified practitioner. Art Therapy recognizes the power of art and art-making to stimulate memories and reveal emotions. Understanding how art interacts with a client's psychological disposition, and how to safely manage and interpret the reactions different art processes may evoke, are competencies that must be gained through substantial experiential learning that is unique to art therapy training. The use of art as therapy thus carries risk of harm if applied beyond the competence of the practitioner. Individuals using art therapy methods and art materials in their mental health practice without appropriate or adequate academic and clinical training pose

significant risk to the emotional stability of their clients. Potential risks include misinterpreting or ignoring assessments that they have not been clinically trained to diagnose or treat, or eliciting adverse responses from clients that they are not properly trained to safely manage.

Profession growth through licensure:

To practice throughout the United States in other leading mental health professions such as marriage and family therapy, counseling, and social work, a state license is a requirement. The license ensures that the person receiving services has achieved the professional level of care required in state law and regulation. It also qualifies licensed providers for insurance reimbursement for both government and private insurance. Each existing mental health practitioner license outlines the specific requirements for practice, which apply uniquely to each profession.

In addition, it would help ensure that the “LCAT” licensure status continues to be a recognizable and legally accepted credential throughout the United States. Significantly, as each state continues to acknowledge, respect, and allow properly trained Art Therapists to practice Art Therapy and Psychotherapy with their Master of Science in Art Therapy and Counseling in nationally accredited programs to practice their expertise without needing further unnecessary licensing, such as a LPC. An LPC is a step removed from the practice of Art Therapy, and does not ensure that a practitioner is qualified to provide therapeutic services in that realm.

There is not one “mental health practitioner” license for the entire mental health field. Each profession requires its own distinct training and pertinent scope of practice and its own license. Likewise, it is not appropriate for someone to practice marriage and family therapy or art therapy, for example, unless specifically trained to do so through a minimum of a master’s degree program.

The license for the art therapy profession should be recognized throughout the United States as its own licensed profession, without necessitating an additional license such as an LPC to practice.

It is a scientifically and quantitatively proven therapy with more efficacy than most other therapeutic methods, and should be as well respected in the state of Connecticut, as it is in other forward thinking states.

In lieu of the availability of the art therapist license, some art therapy master’s graduates have become licensed in related mental health fields. At the same time the approved art therapy master’s programs have increased their study requirements to include areas of study that would enable graduates to qualify for licenses in other

professions. These measures only serve as an obstacle to the acceptance of the professional expertise of qualified art therapists. Other therapeutic solutions quickly lose their efficacy as other mental health professions continue to define or re-evaluate their educational or practice standards and related exams and experience required.

Licensure law in many states is increasingly requiring those qualified for the license to be trained through a program accredited through a CHEA recognized accrediting body such as a CACREP approved program, or the Commission on Accreditation Marriage & Family Therapy Education approved master's programs.

Without question other professions have and will continue to define and fine tune their professional requirements and educational standards to conform to their own national standards and changes in the profession. Those professions may expand educational, practice and other requirements in the future based on the demands and expectations of their unique profession and without regard to those with art therapy training who may hold a license in that profession currently.

The institutions providing training in those fields will also modify or expand training in the profession as the specific mental health profession changes to meet new demands and within an era of increasing knowledge about scientifically and medically supported theories with regard to increases in brain functioning and psychological well being.

In summary, to remain a viable profession the art therapy profession must have its own license to:

- ☐ Protect the public and ensure those in need of services receive services from qualified professional art therapists.
- ☐ Ensure quality of art therapy services by a specifically trained and experienced provider,
- ☐ Provide a distinct service and reimbursement code under public and private insurance for which art therapists are qualified.
- ☐ Enable art therapists to provide their distinct services within state law.
- ☐ Be recognized as an important, unique mental health profession.

Today art therapy is practiced in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, wellness centers, forensic institutions,

schools, crisis centers, senior communities, private practice, and other clinical and community settings. But often the practice is under a subcontracted license group for insurance reimbursement for example or the practitioners holds a license from a related field which may not include art therapy services in the scope of practice included in licensure law.

In states including Maryland, Mississippi, Kentucky, New Mexico, New Jersey and others, a trained and qualified art therapist can practice art therapy as a licensed professional. All other states must now gain that same status for the future of the profession.

Let's make Connecticut the next state to promote consumer safety through regulated art psychotherapy services and providers.